

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Revelation and Scripture, Session 19, Scripture, Results of Inspiration, Scripture Is Sufficient, Clear, Beneficial

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This is Dr. Robert A. Peterson in his teaching on Revelation and Holy Scripture. This is session 19, Scripture, Results of Inspiration. Scripture is Sufficient, Clear, and Beneficial.

Let's pray together, Gracious Father. Thank you for the gift of your word. How lost we would be without it.

Help us to highly esteem it, to believe it, to obey it, and to meditate on it day and night, as the first Psalm encourages us to do. Bless us, we pray, through Jesus Christ the mediator. Amen.

We're talking about the results of inspiration. The Bible's authoritative, it's God's word, it's authoritative, it's inerrant. Scripture is sufficient.

God's word provides all that his people need to gain eternal life and live godly lives. This is called the sufficiency of Scripture. Referring to God, Peter explains, 2 Peter 1:3 and 4. Reading from the ESV, starting with verse 1, Simeon Peter, a servant of an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter extols God's power because it supplies us with everything necessary for life and godliness.

All we need to know is God and pursue holiness. God's glory and goodness, his beauty and moral perfection give us his word with its very great and precious

promises. In turn, scripture's promises enable us to partake of God's nature and escape the world's corruption.

Verse four, Peter does not mean that we will become divine, but that by God's grace, we will share his moral excellence at Christ's return. Even now, God uses his word to promote his people's godliness. Scripture is sufficient to save and sanctify those who believe it.

I failed to give a good reference that I should have given to Van Hooser's work. Kevin Van Hooser, *The Semantics of Biblical Literature*, again in that book, *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*. Kevin J. Van Hooser, *The Semantics of Biblical Literature in Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*.

That's where that stuff I was giving, that teaching I was giving, that comes from speech act theory and applies to biblical studies concerning Van Hooser's using the word infallibility in a broader sense that includes inerrancy, but also other ideas. The word of God is also sufficient to guide us. Peter likens the word to a lamp that provides light in a dark room.

As we already saw, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Although the world is dark, devoid of the knowledge of God, we have the word and follow it as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path, Psalm 119, 106, until the second coming. We follow it.

It guides us. It is sufficient to guide us. Reason, experience, and tradition all have a place in theological study, as we affirmed when we thought about our authorities for doing theology, but they are subordinate to Holy Scripture, which alone is sufficient, and this is another way of coming at the truth of sola scriptura.

The Bible alone is our sufficient guide for life and teaching, doctrine, and ethics. In Jesus' parable, when a rich man in hell asks father Abraham, who speaks for God, this is Luke 16, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and yes, it is a parable, has many parabolic features, merely because the name is used doesn't make it an actual historical reality episode, but it is a parable. When the rich man in hell asked Father Abraham, the God figure, to send someone from the dead to warn his unrepentant brothers, Abraham said they have Moses and the prophets.

Let them hear them. No, father Abraham, the rich man in hell, said, but if someone goes to the dead, goes to them, they will repent. Father Abraham, speaking for God, says that if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not listen if someone rises from the dead.

Luke 16, 29 through 31. The Bible is sufficient. Its message is sufficient.

The irony in that parable is, of course, that when Luke wrote it, Jesus had risen from the dead, and many people still persisted in unbelief. The sufficiency of scripture does not mean, however, that we do not need each other or anything else. Obviously, as we discussed in the process or method of theology, God gives us church leaders and teachers to help us learn and apply the word.

We need others to teach us, and they also need us. Different results follow from the inspiration of holy scripture. It is God's word.

It's authoritative. It is inerrant. It is sufficient.

And scripture is also clear or perspicuous. It has the attributes of perspicuity and clarity. God so reveals himself in scripture that God's people were able to understand its basic message.

This is called the clarity or perspicuity of scripture. The word makes wise the inexperienced, or simple. Psalm 19:7. Parents ought to teach the word to their children.

Deuteronomy 6:1 through 9. Believers are expected to understand the word. Scripture's clarity, though, does not mean that all things in it are equally easy to understand. Romans 11:33 to 36, where Paul just marvels at the wisdom of God revealed in his dealings with Jews and Gentiles.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and how inscrutable are his ways? For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:16 is where Peter says, in Paul's writings, there are some things that are hard to understand.

We're so grateful for that. I'm glad Peter thought so. Clarity of scripture.

Doesn't mean everything is simple to understand. It means that the gospel and the basic teachings of the Bible, including those pertaining to the Christian life, can be understood. God inspires his word to teach us and change us.

And he does so effectively and clearly. Views from the global church. Juan Kim from South Korea wrote that the Bible is not only accessible to an elite and especially favored few.

The books of the Bible, written by many human writers from diverse places over many centuries, do not undermine its clarity. The singularity of the divine authorship guarantees the continuity and organic unity of its contents and message of its contents and message. Yet, while the Bible is hard to understand in some places, this is not because of any elitism on the part of the biblical authors.

The Bible is written for ordinary people, not using some kind of heavenly language or mysterious code words, but ordinary plain language, which the Bible's first readers could readily interpret. Consequently, those who earnestly seek to understand the Bible today can be confident of success in their endeavor. Juan Kim, the reliability and authority of the Bible in the ESV Global Study Bible.

The quotations show it is really global, isn't it? However, believers read the Bible with God's help, for the Holy Spirit is their teacher. This is God's illumination of his word. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable people to understand, believe, and apply scripture.

The same Spirit who inspires the word of God works in us so that we embrace its message. There's a famine of the word of God among the exiles taken to Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, who returned to Jerusalem with Nehemiah and others. Nehemiah 7:4-7.

The people ask Ezra, the scribe, to read the scriptures to them. Nehemiah 8:1. He does so from daybreak until noon for adults and children old enough to understand.

Quote: all the people listened attentively to the book of the law. Nehemiah 8:3. The word is clear to them, and they understand it.

4, quote, all the people were weeping as they heard. Close quote, verse 9. After they were encouraged, and they needed to be encouraged, they had a great celebration, quote, because they had understood the words that were explained to them—verse 12.

Scripture is clear. As Nehemiah the scribe explained the word of God and other Levites helped him, the people gained understanding, and they wept because of their sins, but they rejoiced because of the forgiveness God offered them in his word. After jealous Jews caused a riot in Thessalonica, believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea, Acts 17:10.

As is their custom, they go to the synagogue and preach Christ. Luke, the author of Acts, commends the Bereans, quote, the people here were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, since they received the word with eagerness and examined the scriptures daily to see if these things, the apostles were teaching, were so—verse 11.

The Bereans eagerly and diligently studied the Old Testament to see if Paul's message about Christ was true. Assumed here is the clarity of the scriptures. The Bereans were able to understand the Old Testament's message concerning the Messiah.

They compared that message with Paul's words and found his words true. The word of God is clear and powerful. "Consequently, many of them believed in it, including a number of prominent Greek women as well as men." Acts 17 and verse 12.

Lastly, because God's word is inspired, because the Bible is inspired, it's God's word, it's authoritative, it's inerrant, it's clear, it's sufficient and clear, it is also beneficial, and we shouldn't leave this out. God's holy word is useful and beneficial to believers in many ways.

First, it alone brings the message of salvation, as Timothy learned as a young man. Paul reminds him, you know that from infancy, you have known the sacred scriptures, the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15.

Second, God uses scripture to equip pastors for their ministries. God inspired his word, quote, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Verse 17.

Moreover, the pastor's main task is to minister God's word to God's people. Quote, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, rebuke, correct, and encourage with great patience and teaching. Second Timothy 4, 2. Of course, the great inspiration passage, although it's technically addressed to the men of God, that is pastors, it applies, of course, to the flocks of the men of God as well.

Third, scripture is God's antidote to the poison of false teaching. The two great New Testament passages on scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, and 2 Peter 1:20, and 21, are embedded in contexts that warn of false teaching in the last days. Compare 2 Timothy 4: 3 and 4, 2 Peter 2:1 and 2. God gives his word to protect his people from the false teaching that characterizes the last days.

Fourth, the Bible's God's main tool to help his people grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Paul gives a powerful general statement to this effect. God gives scripture, quote, and it is powerful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, for training in righteousness, 2 Timothy 3:16.

Before I get to particulars as far as the beneficial quality of scripture, under clarity, I should have mentioned this truth as well. We affirm scripture's clarity, and we value

the importance of the Holy Spirit working with the word. So, we didn't mean to leave the spirit out.

We didn't leave the spirit out, but it needs to be said again. The spirit takes the word and makes it effective in hearers' lives. The word is clear, but that does not obviate the necessity of the spirit working.

In unsaved people's lives, they wouldn't be saved without the spirit's working. In believers' lives, the spirit guides and teaches us and illuminates our minds to the word and so forth. When it comes to particulars, God uses the word to minister to his people in numerous ways.

From Psalm 19, we learn that God's word renews life, brings wisdom, fosters joy, teaches truth, warns, and leads to blessing. Psalm 19, 7-11. I'm not sure.

Psalm 119, we learn, the Bible's longest chapter, is filled with ways that God uses his word to benefit us. Scripture produces reverence for God, verses 38 and 79. It purifies verses 9 and 11.

Strengthens, 28, 175. Comforts, 50 and 52. And gives life, verses 93 and 156. It brings hope, verses 49 and 116. Discernment, 66. Wisdom, verses 98 to 100. It brings understanding, verses 104, 130, 169. And guidance, 105, 130. These are merely selections.

Each of these is used in many more parts of this great chapter of the Bible. God's word is beneficial in that it prompts in us such attitudes toward the word as longing for it, verses 40, 131—delight in it, 16, 174.

Love of it, 97, 167. And fear, a proper reverence and fear for God and his truth, verses 120, 161. In addition, it elicits meditation, 15, 148. Obedience, 5, 112. Joy, verses 2, 111. Rejoicing, 4, 162. Hope, 43, 147. And gratitude to God, verse 62. And once again, for many of those, I just chose two.

There were many more. The priceless value of God's word compels us to echo the words of the psalmist. Once again, I want to go to the ESV.

Psalm 119, verse 18. Open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. 72, the law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.

Thousands. 89, forever, O Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Psalm 119, 89.

103, how sweet are your words to my taste. Sweeter than honey to my mouth. And lastly, 162, I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.

Actually, this ends my lectures proper on the doctrines of revelation and scripture. But I want to share that we have time left to do this, some wonderful answers to frequently asked questions from this great book. D. A. Carson has taken it upon himself to be involved either by himself or with others in doing some wonderful works.

He did those two volumes with others, with at least two other scholars editing verses and two books responding to the matters pertaining to justification spawned by the debate concerning Paul's writings, the new perspective on Paul. He and Greg Beal did a wonderful book on the New Testament use of the old, a big one. Here's another big one.

Carson's the editor. *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*. For years, we have needed a book like this.

Carson gathered that it was the 20, 37 first-rate evangelical scholars with all kinds of specializations. Well, we can reap the fruit from this work in summarizing FAQs and frequently asked questions at the end. The first number refers to the chapter where the question is discussed.

The second figure after the period is the question number 1.1. Why is the authority of scripture so hotly debated today? We live in a time when many competing voices scramble to impose their own understandings of life, culture, spirituality, and much else. In the age of authenticity, in the words of Charles Taylor, what makes us authentic is that we adopt an intrinsic suspicion of authorities so that we can be free to be ourselves. From the Bible's perspective, this is in part a reprehensible flight from God, a form of idolatry.

1.2. Why are the issues surrounding the Bible's authority so complicated? A good deal of the complexity is bound up with the range of disciplines that affect how we understand biblical authority. These include disputes about how the Bible's authority has been understood at various points in church history, what truth is, the nature of revelation, principles of interpretation, how different literary genres in the Bible have different ways of making their own rhetorical appeals, text criticism, epistemology, and much, much more. Isn't the word inerrancy pretty useless?

1.3. Since it has to be defined very carefully and technically for it to be deployed at all, answer. There are very few words in the pantheon of theological vocabulary that don't have to be taken carefully and defined if accurate communication and serious discussion are to take place. Consider, after all, God, the word God, justification,

apocalyptic spirit, regeneration, sanctification, and many more. However, a word that is useful in theological debate must be defined carefully.

There's no reason not to use it. Concerning inerrancy, inerrancy has nothing necessary to do with precision, and it is certainly understood that the sacred scriptures are written in a wide diversity of sentences and clauses, not all of which are propositions.

2.1. What role does scripture play in the writings of the church fathers, the patristic period? Scripture lay at the very center of the intellectual and spiritual life of the Christians of the early centuries of the Christian church.

They didn't always understand it correctly, but they loved it. They were devoted to it. There's no question about that.

2.2. Wasn't the formation of the New Testament canon a rather late development? A careful reading of the primary sources shows that the notion of canon as a given set of inspiring authoritative writings was well established in the second century. Did Luther and Calvin provide substantial innovation as they worked out their doctrine of inspiration, their doctrine of scripture? Both reformers were heirs to the high view of scripture they received from the early church and from medieval scholars. Their contributions, so far as their understanding of the nature of scripture is concerned, largely lay in freeing up the Bible from its domestication by certain ecclesiastical traditions and by scarcely constraining allegorizing.

Theologically, there is a Christ-centeredness and a justification-centeredness in their handling of scripture that sets them apart, but such exegesis did not exclude attention to the Bible as the authority for other matters in the church's and believers' lives.

3.2. Doesn't Luther's well-known comment that James is an epistle of straw demonstrate he was prepared to dismiss scripture when it didn't suit his theology? Answer, on the contrary. In the same prefaces, Luther insists that James is a good book because it sets up no human teaching but vigorously promulgates the law of God.

Close quote. But Luther tended to evaluate the weight of any biblical text by the clarity with which it expounded Christ and justification. That is definitely true.

Hence, his characterization of James as an epistle of straw. Oh goodness. How similar are the views of Luther and Calvin on the doctrine of scripture? 3.3. That is, three means the third chapter of this book.

I see. Right. Got it.

That is correct. After the point, refer to the question number. How similar are the views of Luther and Calvin on the doctrine of scripture?

3.3. Both of these reformers embraced the absolute authority of God's word from which the Holy Spirit who brought the text into being through human authors still speaks.

Slight differences emerge in their formulations. Luther, for example, was significantly influenced by William of Ockham, and Calvin was not. Again, Luther does not use the word inspiration as much as Calvin, but he does insist that the Holy Spirit was truly present in the origin and is truly present in the use of scripture.

4.1. I see. 3.3 meant in the third chapter of this volume, the third essay, there are three questions that are listed here. So, 4.1, weren't the scientists of the 17th century, such as Kepler, Galileo, and Newton, like Copernicus a century earlier, weren't they essentially an early species of secularists whose scientific methods left them free to challenge the authority of scripture? No.

All these men were Christians or deists who continued to reverence scripture. But hermeneutically, they tended to argue that when it comes to the natural order, the Bible tends to speak phenomenologically, to use the word we prefer today. And some of these scientists cited scripture with all its authority to justify learning about God and his ways by studying the natural order God has made.

4.3. So, when did a more skeptical approach to the scriptures begin to surface among scientists? Aren't these good questions? Wow. Well into the 18th century, and even then, the evidence is quite mixed.

5.1. Is it not the case that many Christians in the Pietist, Methodist, holiness, and Pentecostal traditions trace at least some of their roots to Spiner and other German Pietists? And that includes their views of scripture? Yes, that much is certainly true.

5.2. Is it not the case that Spiner and other early pietists rejected inerrancy, owing in part to their reaction against Lutheran orthodoxy? It is true that this position is often asserted, not least in the writings of Donald Dayton. But a careful perusal of the primary sources themselves shows it simply isn't the case. The early pietists, by their own testimony, were solidly in the inerrantist camp.

They did not reject Lutheran views of scripture. Rather, they constantly criticized Lutherans for not living up to their own theology, hence the name pietists and pietism. Do many Wesleyans explicitly reject the traditional stance on inerrancy? Some do because they misread the primary documents on pietism, see up above, or

because they distance themselves from the mainstream Wesleyan heritage on this subject.

Others reject the traditional Wesleyan stance on scripture because they think it is incompatible with the free will defense. William Lane Craig has demonstrated, however, that their logic is not unassailable.

7.1. Who are the old Princetonians, and why are they brought up in connection with debates over the nature of scripture? The expression old Princetonians refers to the remarkably learned and influential theologians and biblical scholars at Princeton Seminary in the 19th century, including Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield, the latter working into the beginning of the 20th century.

It is commonly alleged that in their defensive stance against the inroads into the doctrine of scripture in their day, they ended up introducing innovations into the doctrine, avoiding the affirmation of inerrancy that were unknown before them. What more precisely, 7.2, are the old Princetonians alleged to have done? Under the influence of Scottish common sense realism and a Baconian view of science, the old Princetonians allegedly viewed the Bible as a repository of inerrant truths, which simply needed to be carefully gathered together in a scientific fashion so as to compile a reliable systematic theology. Are the charges against the old Princetonians justified? While they were men of their time who undoubtedly made mistakes, the old Princetonians rightly understood their defense of inerrant scripture to stand upon the classic and common heritage of the Church.

In their day, novel critiques of Church teaching were being consolidated on Kantian and Hegelian foundations. Their defense faithfully restated Church teaching and included pointed critiques of Baconianism and Scottish common sense realism. They didn't naively do anything.

They were brilliant. As a matter of fact, they knew the science of their day, too. Just amazing.

They had pointed critiques of Baconianism and Scottish common sense realism. As Seaman puts it, quote, the Princetonian reaffirmation and defense of the Church's teaching on biblical authority is not beholden to an indefensible epistemological stance, close quote. Not only so, but both Hodge and Warfield displayed remarkable profundity in sorting through how systematic theology is responsibly constructed.

A far cry from seeing it as a mechanical collection, a compilation of facts. Some of these attacks, it seems to me, are made by people who simply haven't read Carl Henry, for example, or Warfield. Yes, they made mistakes, but wow.

What is meant by accommodation? In The Fathers, The Middle Ages, and Calvin, the topic of accommodation arose partly out of reflection on the ways in which an infinite and holy God could communicate with his finite and sinful image bearers. He could do so by accommodating himself, only by accommodating himself to their limitations, and partly as a way to explain apparent contradictions in the text of scripture. Language is frequently accommodated to the understanding of common human beings, that is, by describing some things in phenomenological language, which, of course, we still do today when we say things such as the sun will rise in the morning at 5:39 AM. Is that how accommodation is commonly understood today? In the late Enlightenment, while some followed Spinoza and simply rejected biblical authority, many scholars maintained some sort of notion of biblical authority, but under the influence of Socinus, whose views of accommodation included the assertion that the many ostensible errors in scripture were no more than God's accommodation to flawed human beings.

Those who presuppose this more recent view of accommodation, with its ready embrace of many kinds of error, are misleading when they say that accommodation has always been part of sophisticated treatments of scripture. Although formerly true, the statement hides the way the notion of accommodation has changed in recent centuries. Discussion of a topic has become complex.

Arguably, Calvin saw accommodation as a theological category tied to God's grace toward us, and exemplified in some ways in the Incarnation. That's a far cry from seeing it as a merely rhetorical and exegetical device. How come Karl Barth's views of scripture have come back to the focus of so much attention today? There are at least three reasons.

First, Barth was certainly the most prolific and perhaps creative theologian of the 20th century, so it's no wonder that people study his writing. Second, Barth's thought is profoundly God-centered, profoundly Christ-centered, and profoundly grace-centered. And third, his view of scripture, though not quite in line with traditional confessionalism, is reverent, subtle, and complex.

So, scholars keep debating exactly what he was saying. Doesn't Barth say that the Bible isn't a word of God but becomes the word of God when it's received by faith? In fact, he can affirm both. The question is, what does he mean? The becoming language is for Barth tied up with his insistence that the initial revelation of the word and its revelation to the individual believer are tied up together in one gracious whole.

The same is true with Barth's treatment of inspiration. He refuses to speak of the Bible as inspired by itself, but links together what is traditionally called the inspiration of scripture and the illumination of the believer into one whole. Doesn't

Barth claim to stand in line with the reformers so far as his view of scripture is concerned? Yes, he does, but he is clearly mistaken.

Comparison with Calvin, for example, cast up on a few instances where Calvin happily speaks of the inspiration of scripture, the text itself being God-breathed, regardless of whether or not believers receive it. Barth refers to speaking of the out-breathing of the spirit of God in both the text and the believer, thus distancing himself both from the exegesis of scripture and from the Reformation tradition. He appears to recognize his distance from Calvin in Church Dogmatics 2-2 paragraph 3e.

Does Barth allow that there are errors in scripture? Yes, he does, though he refuses to identify them. Barth just seems to be part of the humanness of scripture, though he insists that God's revelatory authority encompasses the whole, errors and all. That, in turn, inevitably raises questions about how passages of scripture that include errors not identified can be said to carry the revelatory authority of God.

10:1. Does the Roman Catholic Church share the same view of scripture that you've been describing as classic or traditional? Yes, indeed, across many centuries and until quite recently, Catholicism has been one of the mainstays in holding that the Bible was uniquely inspired by God and inerrant, but that is not the whole picture. Catholicism has also held that tradition has an authority comparable to that of scripture, and in any case, the magisterium, the teaching authority of the Church, alone determines what scripture and tradition mean. Thus, so far as understanding the nature of scripture goes, the Reformers' argument with Rome was not so much over the nature of scripture as over its exclusive sufficiency.

They said the magisterium is not sufficient. In fact, at times, the official pronouncement of popes and councils has been wrong. What do you mean by, until quite recently, have the views of Catholicism concerning the nature of scripture changed? For the last century or so, Catholicism has gradually recognized more of the human dimensions of scripture than had formerly been the case.

Vatican II, however, signified a more dramatic shift. Influenced in part by liberal Protestantism, the Catholic Church in Vatican II, 1962-65, tended to preserve much of the traditional language while allowing it to stand in scripture a lot of things that an earlier generation would have understood to be errors. Is there a scholarly consensus on when the Old Testament canon was more or less stable? No.

There's a sharp division between the minimalists and the maximalists. The former hold that the Old Testament canon did not begin to form until the second-century Christian era and was still being disputed two centuries later. The maximalists argue that the Old Testament canon was stable by the second century BCE, and rabbinic discussions after Christ were essentially confirmatory.

What is the nature of the evidence that these two positions are fighting over? There is not as much evidence as we'd like, but the crucial text is Josephus' *Against Apion*, written toward the end of the first century AD or CE. Without actually listing the books in the canon, Josephus pretty clearly speaks of the books of the Hebrew canon as being in place a couple of centuries earlier. Later rabbinic discussions tend in the same direction.

Minimalists tend to attack the credibility of Josephus and debate the meaning of the rabbinic sources. Maximalists not only take Josephus at face value, but also find efforts to explain away his clear words simply not credible. Why do the substantive differences among scholars 12.1 regarding the history of Israel matter to our Christian faith? They matter for two reasons.

One, a great deal of biblical Christianity is cast as a historical religion. That is, God has revealed himself to us through events that take place in history, in the space-time continuum. The supreme example is the resurrection of Christ.

The apostle makes clear that if Christ did not really rise from the dead, then our entire faith is a farce. The history of Israel is, in one sense, a useful test case of how Christians think about history and God's self-disclosure in that history. In the Old Testament, the supremely important redemptive event is the Exodus.

Two biblical texts that purport to tell us what happened in the past are the passages where the divine revelation meshes with the ordinary claims of reliable reportage. If scripture cannot be trusted where its claims can most readily be verified or falsified, why should it be trusted in other areas?

12.2. Then the more pressing question becomes, why do these substantive differences regarding the history of Israel exist? Why can't scholars agree on such matters? The question is a good one and too seldom directly discussed by the scholars themselves. Very often, there's a profound difference in their respective control beliefs.

For example, some scholars are deeply committed to philosophical naturalism, eschewing all appeals to supernatural influence or power in discussions of matters alleged to be in the historical arena. Others are convinced that any discussion of the God of the Bible must allow for him to act in ways that are frankly supernatural. These controlling beliefs inevitably influence how we read biblical texts.

Does it make any sense to affirm that the Bible is inerrant in the original when we do not possess the autographs? That's one of the most frequently repeated objections of Bart Ehrman and others. The objection has a certain superficial plausibility, but on closer inspection, it turns on the multivalence of such terms as Bible, text, and original. What do you mean by multivalence in these expressions?

13.2. That is simply a way of saying that these words can mean slightly different things in different contexts.

For example, the Bible can refer to a collection of books that constitute the Holy Scripture. Alternately, it can refer to a particular copy. Original can refer to the original languages of Scripture, or it can refer to an autograph.

Text can refer to the actual manuscript on which something is written or printed, or it can refer to the message encoded in the words without reference to anything concrete. What difference does this make for discussions about inerrancy? Ehrman and others object that when evangelicals affirm the inerrancy of the text, they, evangelicals, are asserting the inerrancy of something they do not possess, that is, the original text. But sophisticated treatments of inerrancy by evangelicals do not make that claim.

Like Warfield, when they speak of the text, they are referring to the immaterial definition, the message of the Scriptures. In other words, the Ehrman objection is attacking a straw man. The same sort of mistake is made with respect to several expressions and sometimes, sad to say, by evangelicals themselves.

In our next lecture, we will continue some of these FAQs concerning this wonderful recent book, *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*.

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